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# FUNERAL SERMON,

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF THE LATE

REV. JOHN-AIKIN, D.D.



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# FUNERAL SERMON,

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THE DEATH OF THE LATE

REV. JOHN AIKIN, D.D.

PROFESSOR OF DIVINITY AT THE ACADEMY IN WARRINGTON.

BY WILLIAM ENFIELD, LL.D.

Erant in eo plurimæ literæ, nec eæ vulgares, sed interiores quædam et reconditæ: summa verborum et gravitas et elegantia; atque hæc omnia vitæ decorabat dignitas et integritas.---Quanta severitas in vultu! quantum pondus in verbis! quam nihil non consideratum exibat ex ore.

Cic.

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TO THE  
RELICT, SON, AND DAUGHTER,  
OF THE DECEASED,

AS AN  
EXPRESSION OF CORDIAL ESTEEM,

AND  
AFFECTIONATE ATTACHMENT,  
THIS DISCOURSE  
IS INSCRIBED,

BY  
THEIR FAITHFUL FRIEND,  
AND OBEDIENT SERVANT,

WARRINGTON ACADEMY,  
*March 5, 1781.*

WILLIAM ENFIELD.

TO THE

RECTOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

MA

THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE



THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

WILLIAM ELLIOT



## FUNERAL SERMON, &c.

I CORINTHIANS XI. 1.

BE YE FOLLOWERS OF ME, EVEN AS I ALSO AM OF CHRIST.

**F**ROM the history of the life and actions of Saint Paul recorded in the New Testament, and from his own familiar epistles, in which the genuine dictates of an honest heart are every where expressed without the smallest indication of artifice or concealment, it manifestly appears that humility was one of the most striking features in his character. Far from making that ostentatious display of his virtues, which we observe in the writings of some of the antient philosophers, in a degree which might lead one to suspect, that, in their catalogue of virtues, vanity had taken

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the place of modesty ; this Christian Apostle, after the example of his divine Master who was "lowly of heart," disclaimed every pretension to superior merit, and ascribed all his attainments to the favour of Heaven. "By the grace of God I am what I am."

YET we find this eminent pattern of humility, proposing his own conduct as an object of imitation to his fellow-christians, and particularly exhorting them to exercise the same prudent condescension, and disinterested benevolence towards each other, which they had seen exemplified in his conduct towards them. "As I please all men in all things, "not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that "they may be saved; be ye followers of me, even as I am "of Christ."

LET him not, however, on this account, be charged with having deviated from his general character: let the occasion and the motive be admitted as a sufficient apology for his conduct. For, why should he who had devoted himself to the service of his brethren and the support of their common cause, at the expence of every worldly interest, scruple to call upon them to follow his example?

BUT, whatever opinion be formed of the consistency of the Apostle's conduct in this instance, or in general concern-  
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ing the propriety of making, on any occasion, a direct display of one's own merit, no doubt can be admitted with respect to the utility of holding up to public view, pictures of eminent wisdom and virtue in the characters of others. It is universally acknowledged, that example is a more efficacious and agreeable instructor than precept; impressing the imagination, and interesting the feelings, at the same time that it informs the understanding; and firing the breast with that generous emulation, which is the most powerful incentive to great and useful actions.

I WILL therefore make no apology for directing your attention, on the present occasion, to the character of an Individual, whose talents, attainments, and virtues, placed him far above the common level of human nature, and shone through the veil which his modesty cast over them, with a lustre and influence which commanded universal admiration;—who had an unquestionable title to the testimony which our Saviour bore to John his fore-runner, “He was a burning and a shining light.”

WHILST I am attempting to delineate the principal features of this eminent character, let it not be supposed that, with the numerous tribe of venal panegyrists, I am substituting a work of fancy in the room of a copy from nature.



The picture shall be drawn from the life; and I trust, those who had the happiness of knowing the original, will be at no loss to discover the likeness. Nor let it be imagined, that, in undertaking this difficult task, I am influenced by the poor ambition of obtaining the applause of survivors by a studied eulogium on the virtues of the deceased; or by the weak expectation of giving any additional lustre to a name, which shines with the unborrowed rays of substantial merit. On an occasion like this, let it be supposed that I am influenced by higher and better motives;—let it be believed, that I am induced by a desire, of paying the last public tribute of respect to the memory of a man I esteemed—a character I revered—a friend I loved; and of assisting my audience in learning the lessons of wisdom and virtue which such an example is adapted to teach.

THE GREAT AND GOOD MAN of whom I speak, was endowed with natural powers, which qualified him for high attainments and extensive usefulness; and the talents which he had received from the great Lord of nature, he did not suffer to remain unemployed. Clearness of perception, strength of judgment, vigour of imagination, and warmth of feeling, were in him most happily united.

WITH this rare combination of natural advantages, he early devoted himself to learning, in that profession in which  
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he apprehended his abilities and acquisitions would be most useful to the world. And by a judicious disposition, and an assiduous improvement of his time, both during the period of his elementary studies, and through all the labours of his more advanced years, he obtained an acquaintance with literature and science, more extensive and accurate than usually falls to the share of one man.

In the several branches of learning, which are more immediately connected with the profession of the Christian ministry, he was an eminent master. All the great questions concerning the nature, faculties, and operations of the human mind—concerning the foundation and extent of moral obligation—concerning the principles of civil government and law—concerning the attributes and providence of the Supreme Being—concerning the divine authority of the Mosaic and Christian revelation—and lastly, concerning the general design and spirit, and the peculiar doctrines of Christianity—with the arguments usually urged in support of the different opinions which have been entertained on these subjects,—lay before his understanding in methodical arrangement, always ready to be called forth as occasion required. Nor was his mind a mere common-place of metaphysical and theological knowledge. On every topic of this kind which engaged his attention, he deliberated calmly, reasoned clearly,



ly, and formed a judgment for himself with caution and impartiality.

THE Holy Scriptures he studied with that close and minute attention, which was the result of a sincere desire to understand these sacred volumes, and to deduce from them an uncorrupted system of religion and morals. In these important studies, he not only made a judicious use of every aid which could be derived from the labours of critics and commentators, but availed himself of every light, which an extensive knowledge of antient history both ecclesiastical and civil, a good acquaintance with the writings of the Fathers of the Christian Church, and a critical skill in the original languages of the Old and New Testament, could afford him.

NOR were his researches confined to the more immediate objects of his profession, morals and theology. He took an extensive range through the fields of antient learning, and formed an intimate acquaintance with the philosophers, historians and poets of Greece and Rome. Regarding these invaluable remains of antiquity as the most perfect models of correct and elegant composition, and as an inexhaustible treasury of rational entertainment to a cultivated mind; he studied them, at the same time with all the accuracy of a judicious critic, and with all the discernment and feeling of  
a man



a man of true taste. From the walks of literature, he often turned aside into the paths of natural science; and in these occasional excursions, he gathered up much valuable knowledge, respecting the general laws of the material world, the distinct properties of bodies, and the history of nature, animate and inanimate. In short, there is scarcely a province in the extensive and daily enlarging empire of human knowledge, which his philosophic and inquisitive mind did not visit, though his particular engagements or inclinations might lead him to fix his more stated residence in one region rather than another.

BUT let it not be from hence surmised, that his learning was too extensive to be deep and solid. The ignorant and the indolent are apt to take it for granted, that every man who is a general scholar, must for that reason be a superficial one. But the industrious bee doth not extract her sweets from the flowers she visits, the less perfectly, because she roves from plant to plant, and from field to field: nor doth the philosopher less completely execute his purpose in any single branch of study, because he has activity of mind and patient assiduity sufficient to enable him, when one vein of the quarry is exhausted, to open another. Of this the present example is a sufficient confirmation: for notwithstanding the variety of his pursuits, he did not satisfy himself with skim-  
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ming over the surface of knowledge, but penetrated its most deep and hidden recesses.

WITH an understanding thus richly furnished, this excellent man possessed the most rational and steady PRINCIPLES of religion and virtue.

THE first object of his researches was, to discover those truths which are the foundation of moral wisdom. Subjects merely speculative he occasionally examined, either in the way of amusement, or in the ordinary course of instruction. But those questions which are intimately connected with the conduct of life, and the happiness of rational beings, he studied with a degree of attention and solicitude, which discovered a deep sense of their importance.

WHILST he readily acknowledged the existence, and the powerful operation, of original principles in human nature, he was no advocate for that indolent philosophy (so well adapted to the spirit and manners of the present age) which has raised an unnatural contest between *Reason* and *Common Sense*, and instructed men to trust to their feelings rather than to their understandings. He thought it the duty of every rational being to employ his powers of reasoning and judging in the search of truth, and to endeavour to deduce the practical rules of life and manners from such theoretical propositions



propositions as have been established by conclusive argumentation. Accordingly, he employed his most serious thoughts in framing a consistent and connected system of belief, which, though not wholly free from difficulties, might however have the support of probable evidence from reason or testimony. On these grounds—perhaps the only grounds which ought to satisfy a wise man—he built his opinions concerning the great subjects of morals, religion and christianity. And from these opinions he deduced practical maxims of conduct, which he at all times conscientiously observed; strictly adhering to whatever he judged to be suitable to the nature and condition of man, conducive to the happiness of the species, and conformable to the laws of God.

THE laws of God, as promulged in the Gospel of Christ, he obeyed with religious exactness. Acknowledging the divine authority of this great Legislator after having examined with the most anxious attention the grounds of his claim; the precepts of Christianity, and the sanctions by which they are supported, operated with all their energy upon his mind to produce the character of a sincere and exemplary CHRISTIAN.

HIS ideas of the Supreme Being, and of the nature of his moral government, were worthy of the Christian Philosopher:

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and they were so constantly present to his mind, and so deeply impressed upon his heart, that they formed a settled habit of piety which influenced all his actions, and produced a lively sense of religion which animated all his devotions. His piety was not merely a principle; it was a sentiment, which constantly possessed his mind, and which discovered itself in the solemnity with which he always performed the duties of religious worship, and in the reverence with which he at all times spoke of the Deity. In this respect he resembled that religious philosopher, Mr. *Boyle*, of whom it is related, that he never mentioned the name of God without visible expressions of profound veneration.

CONCEIVING it to be the great object of the Christian Revelation, to give mankind an assurance of a future state of rewards and punishments, and thus to connect the actions and events of the present life with the life to come; he regarded it as the first Christian duty, to "seek for glory, honour, and immortality by a patient continuance in well-doing," and held it as a maxim, which with a sincere Christian will admit of no exception, That wherever the interests of this world and the next interfere, the former ought to give way to the latter.

HE could not persuade himself to adopt those relaxed ideas of the system of Christian morals, by which many accommodate



moderate their principles to the taste of a luxurious and licentious age, and while they indulge every favourite inclination without control, still imagine themselves good Christians. This attempt to lower the standard of Christian morals, till it is brought to some sort of agreement with fashionable opinions, and affords some indulgence to fashionable follies and vices, he considered as the most dangerous corruption of Christianity.

THE principles of this good man were not of that pliant kind, which could easily adapt themselves to every occasion. Had he been placed in a situation which would have required an extensive intercourse with mankind, they would probably have subjected him to difficulties, of which the man of the world has no apprehension. They would have required him to struggle against the tide of licentious manners: but they would have supported him in the struggle; they would not have suffered him to be carried away by the torrent. They would have laid upon him the hard necessity of refusing the bribes, with which avarice and ambition would have tempted him to practice "the deceits of unrighteousness:" but they would have enabled him to view the seducing bait with honest indignation; and in the consciousness of his integrity they would have given him a prize, which mines of silver could not purchase.



HAPPY for him, however, it was, that his situation and profession in life excused him from these painful trials, and permitted him to practice every lesson of contentment, moderation and inflexible integrity, which Christianity teacheth, without being exposed to the ridicule of unprincipled libertines, or to the insolent disdain of those who have loaded themselves with the spoils of iniquity. His humble station, it is true, did not afford him the envied distinctions which attend the rich and mighty: but his great mind, inured to seek, and not doubting to find, sufficient stores of happiness within itself, taught him to despise them. So much did he value the treasures of wisdom and virtue above the gifts of fortune,—so tenacious was he of the precious stores he possessed,—that he has often declared, that he should be fearful of receiving a great increase of riches, lest they should rob him of that philosophic tranquillity and self-possession, and those intellectual and moral pleasures, which he valued above every thing else.

THE same rational and Christian principles, which gave him such elevation and strength of mind, likewise taught him the lessons of humility and charity.

IN the midst of all his great attainments, and the distinction and respect which these procured him, he always discovered the utmost diffidence of his abilities, and was himself



self the only person unacquainted with his merit. Far from "thinking of himself more highly than he ought to think," he never assumed to himself the consequence which every one else perceived to belong to him. In some cases this excess of modesty was perhaps painful to himself: on some accounts, it was doubtless to be regretted by others; particularly, as it has deprived posterity of all opportunity of reaping benefit from his labours: but, let us not, for this, refuse the tribute which is due to a virtue which all good men agree to admire, and which is "in the sight of God of great price."

BENEVOLENCE was in this good man, something more than gentleness and sensibility of nature; it was a principle and habit, grafted on the stock of natural temper by reflection, and established by the authority of religion. Hence it was uniform and steady in its operation, disposing him to every good work. It was this spirit of Christian charity which diffused an air of courtesy and urbanity over his whole manner, free from the smallest tincture of insincerity. It was this spirit which inclined him to "follow peace with all men,"—which prevented even the sons of discord from being his enemies, and which united him to his friends and connections, by bonds which nothing but death could have dissolved. Lastly, it was this spirit which led him to the exercise of moderation and candour, in a degree which reflects



reflects distinguished honour upon his character, and merits particular notice.

NOT that he was indifferent to the cause of truth, or unconcerned for the support of pure religion. No man was ever more in earnest in the search of the former, or more desirous of serving the interests of the latter. But his good sense, extensive reading, and deep thinking, enabled him to perceive the difficulties which attend every system of philosophy and religion, and the numerous avenues by which prejudice and misapprehension find their way into the human mind. He felt the full force of the reflection which was made by one who has obtained, by way of distinction, the appellation of *the wise man*,—a reflection which those who know the most, are always most inclined to adopt—“ I said, I will be wise, but it is far from me.” Hence he was always open to conviction himself, and always disposed to allow the utmost scope for freedom of inquiry to others. He knew how to encourage a liberal spirit, to indulge inquisitiveness, and even to endure contradiction; and could bear every thing but ignorant conceit, and obstinate pertinacity. There are not a few who will patiently allow you to controvert their opinions in some points, while you confine yourself within a certain latitude; but if you venture farther, their apprehensions are alarmed; their temper is discomposed; and you have little chance of obtaining a fair hearing. The good  
man



man whose character I am describing, carried his liberality and candour much farther. Perceiving that freedom of discourse, as well as of thinking, is necessary to the discovery of truth, he listened with a candid ear to every argument which was proposed with ingenuity and modesty.

Good Christians of every sect, and honest men of every persuasion, had a share in his esteem. Merit of every kind he was capable of distinguishing, and was always inclined to respect. As a philosopher, the society of wise and learned men was his delight. As a Christian, he loved every true friend of religion and virtue as his brother. As a citizen, he lamented the disorders and corruptions of the state, and prayed for the prosperity of his country. As a man, he interested himself in whatever concerned the improvement and happiness of mankind.

SUCH were the endowments, such the virtues, which distinguished the character of this valuable man. How faithfully, how successfully, these talents were employed in the service of mankind, now remains to be related.

THE influence of his eminent attainments and excellent qualities, was long and largely experienced in his domestic relations. To the virtues of the husband and the father, those who best knew their value, and are now, with tears of affection



affection and gratitude, lamenting their loss, will bear a willing testimony. Of the skill and success with which he performed the duties of parental education, the world is in possession of proofs, which will live to distant posterity.

IN the capacity of a Christian minister, he discharged the offices of the sacred character with dignity and reputation. But infirmities of constitution soon rendering it hazardous for him to speak in public, he directed his labours into the channel of private education. Afterwards, through many of the most valuable years of his life, he was more publicly employed in communicating the rich stores of learning and science which he had with so much judgment and industry collected, to young men destined for various stations in life, and particularly to such as were devoted to the Christian ministry.

IN these important labours he discovered a degree of ability, wisdom and fidelity, which commanded universal respect from those who attended upon his instructions. Upon every subject, he laid before them a full and methodical detail of the principal arguments, advanced on each side by the best writers; subjoining his own observations, which were always the result of patient thinking and mature judgment: but at the same time leaving his pupils at full liberty to examine the merits of every question, and form an opinion for themselves. Unbiased himself, he used neither artifice nor  
influence



influence to bias others. To this may be added, that he conveyed his ideas with a clearness of method, precision of language, and energy of elocution, which commanded attention, and gave a peculiar dignity and weight to his instructions.—And whilst he was careful to furnish those who were educating for the Christian ministry with all the knowledge proper to the profession, he was equally solicitous to instil into their minds the principles, and to inspire them with the spirit, of Christianity. His lectures on Morals and Theology, and his comments upon the Holy Scriptures, were adapted to improve the heart, as well as to inform the understanding. In this manner did this judicious and faithful Preceptor approve himself a “well-instructed scribe, able to bring out of his treasures things new and old.” And he had the happiness of seeing his labours in this important branch of education amply rewarded, in the growing reputation and usefulness of those who, having sat at the feet of this *Gamaliel*, have from time to time gone forth into the churches of Christ, “thoroughly furnished” for their office, “workmen who need not be ashamed.” In their faithful labours in the cause of religion and virtue, “being dead, he yet speaketh.”

HERE let me be permitted to mention with grateful respect, the essential support and reputation, which the *Seminary of learning*, in which he presided from its first institution, has de-

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rived from his numerous and important services, which have so largely contributed to accomplish the laudable designs of its generous founders, to overcome the difficulties which have from time to time risen up to obstruct its success, and to give it that degree of stability, and that prospect of increasing usefulness, which it at present enjoys. As long as this Seminary continues to be distinguished by sound learning, just and liberal principles, and virtuous manners, so long let the name of AIKIN be there remembered with respect and veneration.

BUT it is of more general concern, and reflects higher honour on his memory, to add, that the assiduous labours of his long and valuable life were a public blessing to the world, by advancing useful knowledge, and propagating the genuine principles of religion and virtue. On these accounts he deserves to be ranked among the benefactors and friends of mankind, and to be remembered with distinction by distant posterity. But, though posterity should neglect to give his name a place in the tablet of *fame*, it cannot be doubted, that it will be enrolled in the tablet of *merit* by the hand of the Almighty, and preserved with honour in the records of eternity.

THE natural close of a life distinguished by such high attainments and useful virtues, is an old-age of tranquillity,  
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and a peaceful death. In this manner it was that this exemplary Christian "finished his course." Just at the period, when an apprehension of increasing infirmities, more perceived by himself than his friends, had induced him to form the design of retiring from his public labours, whilst he was yet in possession of his excellent talents, and in the actual exercise of them, he was called to receive the eternal "recompence of reward," and permitted, without the painful prelude of lingering sickness and decay, to "enter into the joy of his Lord."

"BLESSED are the dead, who thus die in the Lord; for  
"they rest from their labours and their works follow them."  
"Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the  
"end of that man is peace."

Is there not, my brethren, in the character we have been contemplating, a voice which speaks aloud this language;  
"Be ye followers of me, even as I also have been of Christ?"  
To such a voice, who will not be disposed to lend a willing and obedient ear?

AMONG those who have listened with admiration to the doctrine of this wise Preceptor, and gathered up the rich fruits of knowledge which have fallen from his lips, none will, I trust, be found, who will pay less regard to the silent  
but



but authoritative language of his character, than they have been accustomed to pay to his living instructions. From the disciples of such a master much is to be expected; especially from those to whom his labours were more particularly devoted, the candidates for the Sacred Profession. From these it will be expected, that they retain that high idea of the dignity and sanctity of the clerical character, and that strong perception of the religious and moral obligations connected with it, which they must, in some degree at least, have imbibed from the precepts and example of their Teacher. It will be expected that, thus instructed, they enter upon their office under a deep conviction of the reality and importance of religious and moral principles, and with a sincere desire to render some essential service to mankind, by judiciously and faithfully discharging the functions of the Christian ministry. It will be expected that, considering themselves as professional advocates in the cause of truth, virtue, and religion, and herein intrusted with an important charge, for which they are accountable to the public, and to the great Lord of all, they will support the dignity of their profession, by unspotted purity of character, by a manly gravity of deportment, by cultivating a taste for science and literature, and by assiduous endeavours, both in public and private, to propagate rational principles and virtuous manners.

If these expectations should, in any instances, be frustrated; if any who have been taught by this eminent Instructor should  
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enter upon the sacred office with a light and trifling mind—inattentive to the nature of the character they are assuming—insensible of the weighty duties belonging to it; or should hereafter bring disgrace upon their profession by giving themselves up to indolence, dissipation, or licentiousness;—But let me be excused from pursuing into its consequences a supposition, which it is, I trust, unnecessary to make: let me presume, that no one will act so inconsistently with the veneration which he professes to entertain for the memory of this great and good man, as to trample under foot his most solemn instructions.

I MUST not conclude without suggesting, in a few words, an important reflection, which men of every rank and profession may deduce from the character which has been exhibited. In this character you have seen the happy fruits of intellectual and moral culture: you have seen how much it is in the power of Wisdom to do for her followers: you have seen, that an improved understanding, honest principles, and virtuous manners, can give a man the true enjoyment of himself, qualify him for extensive usefulness, procure him universal respect, and enable him to live happily and to die in peace. Go to the most successful devotees of Wealth—the divinity whom all the world worshippeth—and call upon them to declare, whether it has been in her power, to do as much for them. Filling their coffers, has she at the same  
time



time enriched their understandings? Increasing their power of doing good, has she withal increased the inclination? Surrounding them with that splendor which captivates vulgar admiration, and procures the external expressions of deference and respect; has she likewise endued them with that sterling integrity, which commands the tribute of heart-felt esteem? Placing within their reach the instruments of luxurious enjoyment, has she also given them a contented mind, and provided them with a "more enduring substance," which will abide with them when the gifts of fortune shall "take to themselves wings and fly away?"—If these are things which Wealth has never done for her most favoured votaries—which lie wholly beyond her power; let her no longer presume to maintain the unequal contest with Wisdom: let all mankind agree in acknowledging, that "the merchandise of wisdom is better than the merchandise of silver; and the gain thereof, than fine gold." "Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom; and with all thy getting, get understanding."



T H E E N D.



